

# WORKFORCE HORIZONS

## Planning Tomorrow's Workforce Today

Louisiana Department of Civil Service

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### *In This Issue:*

- ✓ *Making Use of the Mature Workforce*  
– p. 1
- ✓ *Tips for Onboarding New Employees*  
– p. 2

### **MAKING USE OF THE MATURE WORKFORCE**

As anyone who studies population demographics knows, America's workforce is shrinking.<sup>1</sup> In the 1970's, the workforce grew by 29%. But in the current decade it will increase only 12% and in the next decade by only 4%. The major cause is the aging of Baby Boomers. There is a projected talent crunch in which employers will be competing for a decreasing supply of younger workers. Not only will the numbers be smaller but there will be a significant "brain drain" as organizational knowledge, skills and experience is lost.

In the current decade the population of adults age 18-34 will increase by only 7% and in the next decade (2010-2020) by only 4%. The 35-54 age group will experience no growth in these decades.

Although most attention has been focused on how to recruit the Generation X and Y employees from this dwindling pool, many employers are waking up to the fact that the pool

### **WORKFORCE PLANNING MAXIM OF THE DAY**

*"No institution can possibly survive if it needs geniuses or supermen to manage it. It must be organized in such a way as to be able to get along under a leadership composed of average human beings."* –

**Peter F. Drucker**

of persons over age 55 is the only segment of the adult population that will be growing substantially during this period. Aging Baby Boomers will increase the number of persons over 55 by 28% in the current decade and another 27% from 2010-2020. Because 80% of Baby Boomers also desire to continue working in some capacity during their retirement years, they are a potentially large source of job applicants – applicants who bring a great store of knowledge and experience to the job. In fact, a 2007 global survey *Future of Retirement Study*, said that mature workers were just as productive and motivated as younger workers and more loyal and reliable.

Here are some of the best practices organizations are developing to tap this resource:

Survey your older workers, especially ones in key positions. Find out their retirement intentions and what would most motivate and retain them (e.g. flexible or part-time hours, compensation, changed work duties, career development or training)

Build a culture that values older employees and their experience. Make older employees prominent and visible in your organization. Publicly acknowledge their expertise. One way to do this is to highlight the achievements of mature workers in organizational publications or meetings. Another is by having them mentor younger employees or give seminars or conduct informal discussions or roundtables to pass on their knowledge.

Build a reputation as an active recruiter and employer of mature workers. Older workers will be attracted to your organization if they see that you actually hire older workers and value them. Often when employers talk about recruiting strategies they focus exclusively on younger workers and the challenges of recruiting Generation X and Y. If you want to tap the mature worker pool, you must actively recruit them and include them in your discussions of recruiting strategy.

Make sure your recruiting and hiring practices do not discriminate intentionally or unintentionally against older employees or applicants. Review job announcements and recruiting pamphlets for language that may appear to discriminate against older workers. Review the hiring and promotion practices of managers to make sure they are not showing a bias against hiring older workers, particularly young managers who may be uncomfortable supervising employees much older than themselves.

Do not dismiss older workers as potential candidates for entry-level or lower level positions. Many retirees who are interested in working are looking for a change of pace and opportunity to learn and do something new and completely different from their former career. Sometimes former managers may want a job in the same field but with less responsibility. These mature workers bring a lot of life experience with them and are less likely to turnover than younger workers since they value loyalty to a particular organization more than Generation X and Y employees.

Incorporate aging and generational issues in your training for Managers. Baby Boomers have different values and are motivated differently from Generation X and Y. Increasingly, situations will arise where supervisors or managers in their 30's are supervising persons over 55. This can be as much a challenge for young managers as managers in their 50's have understanding the values and attitudes of younger workers. Managers today have a multi-generational workforce and must understand the attitudes, values, and motivators of all generational groups.

Provide continuous learning and training opportunities for older workers. You are never too old to learn. Often, older workers are neglected when it comes to training and development. Yet, whether you are trying to retain and motivate older workers who are already on board or hire older workers from outside, they will be more productive and motivated when offered the same training and learning opportunities as younger workers. Mixing older and younger workers in the same classes allows them to learn from each other.

<sup>1</sup> Information in this article is adapted from : Dychtwald, Ken, Ph.D. and Baxter, David. "Capitalizing on the New Mature Workforce." *Public Personnel Management*, Volume 36, No. 4, Winter 2007

### **QUOTE OF THE DAY**

*"Things do not happen. Things are made to happen."* - **John F. Kennedy**

### **TIPS FOR ONBOARDING NEW EMPLOYEES**

A new hire's impression of an organization and their motivation to succeed is affected a great deal by what they experience their first day on the job. The more you can make them feel welcome, and prepared to fit in and start being a productive part of the organization, the better.

Here are some tips<sup>2</sup>

Begin the onboarding process prior to the first day on the job. Onboarding involves activities such as familiarizing the new hire with policy, working hours, and benefits, getting forms filled out, meeting co-workers and supervisors, being assigned a workspace and supplies, learning what their duties will be, etc. Some of this can be done prior to the person's first day on the job. For example, after the offer is made, the employee may be sent brochures describing health insurance and other benefits and organizational policy on issues such as leave, working hours, flex-time arrangements, dress code, etc. These can be reviewed by the employee prior to reporting and make him or her better prepared. If you have a lot of this material on a website, you may just refer the employee to the website, although sometimes providing a more tailored "welcome packet" can be more effective. You should at least send the employee an agenda of what will happen their first day. It is also a good idea to send a position description. If the worksite is different from the location where the employee was interviewed, you might also send a map with directions to your office.

Inform existing staff about the new employee prior to their reporting. Once the new hire has accepted the offer, it is a good idea to inform all staff of the new hire's name and position and the date they will be arriving. It is also a good idea to give some background information on the new hire such as a short summary of their prior education and related work experience. Introductions and meetings with key staff, colleagues or clients the new hire will be interacting with as well as provision for assignment of supplies, workspace, etc. should be scheduled prior to the new hire's arrival and the schedule included with the agenda sent. Consider appointing a mentor or "buddy" for the new hire to show them around the office, take them to lunch the first day, orient them to locations of break rooms, bathrooms, etc.

Have all supplies and equipment including computers set up in advance. The employee's workspace should be well-stocked with needed supplies and email accounts, voice mail, telephones lines, etc. should be set up before arrival if possible, so they are ready when the

employee reports. Having business cards pre-printed with the employee's name and position is also a nice welcoming touch to make them feel included.

Create job aid checklists or tips. Create handy user-friendly references for tasks the employee will be doing frequently and immediately. For example, how to operate phone, fax machines, photocopiers, phone routing lists, key contact persons for different resources, etc.

Create an onboarding checklist. Use this and share it with other staff members to make certain all onboarding steps are done.

Get feedback from new hires and your own staff on the onboarding process so you can continuously improve it. Sometime during the probationary period, survey the new hire about the onboarding process to uncover any snags and get suggestions for improvements. Also talk to other staff members involved in the onboarding process and get their feedback.

<sup>2</sup>Adapted from "Best Practice Tips for Talent Management," Plateau Systems, March 2008

### CREDITS

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*Comments and submissions:* We welcome questions about workforce planning and suggestions for improvements to the newsletter as well as submissions of articles about what your agency is doing in workforce planning. Questions, comments, and requests to be added to the distribution list for the newsletter should be sent to the editor.

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